SERVICE CENTER MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE (SCMI)

REVISED FY 2000 and FY 2001 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLANS

Since 1993, the county-based agencies (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development) have been implementing streamlining plans to collocate field offices and reengineer business processes, with the goal of improving service to USDA customers. The Service Center Modernization Plan for the County-Based Agencies outlines SCMI activities and expected outcomes and implementattion dates. The county-based agencies and direct appropriations for the Common Computing Environment (CCE) contribute all SCMI funding for FY 1999 – FY 2001 estimated in this plan.

The SCMI supports USDA Management Initiative 2 - improve customer service by streamlining and restructuring county offices. The SCMI coordinates the efforts of inter-agency project teams working toward service center implementation. SCMI activities include coordinating agency streamlining of the field office structure, reengineering and integrating the business processes of the Service Center agencies, introducing shared information system technology, expanding partnerships, and improving outreach to underserved customers. The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture assigned responsibility for implementation and coordination of the CCE component to the Office of Chief Information Officer.

The mission of USDA Service Centers is ambitious:

> USDA Service Centers, in partnership with individuals and communities, will deliver agricultural, rural development, and natural resource programs efficiently and with a quality of service that exceeds customer expectations.

The SCMI is working toward a customer-oriented vision to reach out and deliver programs that are responsive to customer needs, treating each with dignity and respect. The vision is based on five primary elements:

- Establish USDA Service Centers where agricultural, rural development and natural resource conservation programs are provided by employees offering seamless service.
- Exceed the expectations of customers by providing fair, equal, courteous, high quality, professional, and personalized service in a timely and non-discriminatory manner.
- Reduce administrative and program delivery costs by implementing common, reengineered processes in support of USDA Service Center operations.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new partnerships with individuals, public organizations, private organizations, and government agencies to maximize the use of limited resources and attain common goals and objectives, while protecting the privacy of our customers.
- Another important part of our efforts to modernize field operations is the consolidation of three separate and largely redundant administrative systems into a single, centralized Support Services Bureau (SSB). Although the FY 2000 Appropriations Act prohibited creation of the SSB, the Secretary is seeking congressional support to remove this prohibition. By pooling resources in the administrative area, each agency will be better positioned to provide program support.

Goal 1: Develop seamless program delivery and customer outreach processes that improve the quality of customer service, deliver products and services at reduced cost, and reduce the burden on the USDA customer.

Objectives: **1.1** Service Center program and service delivery operations satisfy the needs of more than 90% of USDA customers.
1.2 Reduce the USDA staff effort, cost and time required to deliver programs and reach out to USDA customers at the Service Centers while decreasing the time demands and paperwork burden for USDA customers.

Baseline: Customer satisfaction levels in 1996 are the baseline for customer satisfaction. The 1996 Service Center operations represent 100% of the Service Center baseline cost.

Program Activities: SCMI will continue to operate as a joint project of the Farm Services Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the agencies of the Rural Development mission area and be managed by a subcommittee of the National Food and Agriculture Council. The USDA CIO will continue to provide oversight and approve all technology investments. The Service Center Modernization Plan of the County Based Agencies, November 1999, describes how the SCMI will be implemented. Listed below is the planned goal 1 funding for SCMI minus the CCE component.

The SCMI is supported by a combination of funding from the S&E accounts and personnel contributed by the service center agencies as well as by the DA. The planned breakout by funding source in $000 is:

	FY 2000	FY2001
FSA	$10,296	$10,296
NRCS	$ 8,854	$ 8,854
RD	$ 3,500	$ 3,500
CCE		
OSEC		
TOTAL	$22,650	$22,650

	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Funding (in thousands of dollars)	$11,566	$15,212	$22,650	$22,650

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Percentage of Service Center business reengineered.	0%	58%*	60%	90%
Number of projects tested in pilots.	4	15	22	22
Number of projects in national deployment.	N/A	1	7	12
Percentage reduction in staff time performing reengineered processes:				
At pilot sites.	15%	45%	60%	60%
At nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	45%

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Percentage reduction in program delivery time for reengineered processes:				
At pilot sites.	35%	40%	45%	50%
At nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	45%
Percentage reduction in customer time required to obtain services for reengineered processes:				
At pilot sites.	N/A	5%	15%	35%
At nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	35%
Percentage reduction in customer paperwork burden:				
At pilot sites.	N/A	10%	25%	60%
Nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	60%
Percentage of customers reporting increased satisfaction:				
At pilot sites.	N/A	25%	60%	70%
Nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	70%
Percentage increase in program participants considered underserved:				
At pilot sites.	N/A	N/A	10%	207%
Nationwide.	N/A	N/A	N/A	15%

*Represents percentage of SCMI business processes reengineered (BPR) beyond the design phase.

Discussion of Annual Performance Goals: Achievement of these goals supports USDA Management Initiative 2 - improve customer service by streamlining and restructuring county offices.

The strategic objective of reengineering activities is to reduce the number of manual and redundant or unnecessary processes currently being performed in Service Centers thus freeing employee time to focus on program delivery and work directly with customers in an outreach and consulting role. SCMI reengineering assumes that the business will operate within a common computing environment that provides the enabling technology to support business objectives.

USDA is taking an incremental approach to BPR. Currently, the SCMI has initiated the reengineering design of approximately 60% of the Service Center business processes, not including agency specific program processes, starting with those processes that are expected to provide the greatest benefits. USDA is planning on completing the reengineering design for the remaining 40% of the business processes by the end of year 2002, as resources permit. Pilot tests of reengineered processes began in FY 1998 and will be conducted over the next several years to assess and measure benefits associated with prototype applications that support reengineered business processes. Following pilot testing, nationwide deployment of BPR projects will occur as national deployment after successful testing.

Performance goals for BPR include reduction in staff time to perform processes, reduction in program delivery time, reduction in customer time to obtain services, reduction in customer paperwork burden, increase in customer satisfaction with USDA services, and increase in service to underserved customers. These measures are being tracked for both pilot testing and nationwide deployment activities.

The BPR effort will provide the flexible environment required for responsiveness to ever changing USDA programs. Continuous improvement and quality management are being built into the reengineered Service Center so that the improvement process becomes part of the culture. Employee and customer time saved cannot be fully realized until the full common computing and integrated data environments are

available. Thus, the SCMI has only projected modest savings through FY 2001. Once the Common Computing Environment (CCE) is fully deployed, savings will accrue much faster.

Although the majority of customers are satisfied with services currently provided, there are two key issues for customer service. The first is to maintain customer satisfaction through the process of office consolidations and the transition to the new Service Center business environment. The second is to steadily increase customer satisfaction through reengineering of business processes that meet future expectations for program delivery and service quality.

Means and Strategies: Resources are required to support the implementation of BPR projects and the operation of pilot sites in FY 2000 and FY 2001. Parallel BPR design projects will also require funding as the SCMI reengineers the remainder of the Service Center activities. USDA is validating an initial cost-benefit study that indicated a 34% return on investment (ROI) in a CCE. That ROI can only be attained if the reengineering efforts drive the technology insertion.

Service Center reengineering is being accomplished incrementally along with testing and piloting of technology alternatives. USDA has established a set of reengineering implementation strategies focused on attaining the goals articulated first in a Concept of Operations published in 1995 and enhanced by the SCMI Strategic Plan developed in 1997. These strategies focus on the "back-office" internal Service Center operations such as: the best way to manage customer information within a Service Center; determining eligibility; monitoring compliance; and the "front office" focus on reaching out and providing better service to USDA customers.

SCMI is trying to reduce the time spent on the redundant back office tasks by automating them so that more time can be spent on the front office activities. Additionally, USDA is working to reduce the amount of time customers spend on USDA paperwork as well as the amount of time required to get the information required to satisfy their needs. BPR will result in improved application processing and delivery of benefits. The creation of an integrated data environment will provide significant opportunities to reuse information thus reducing the time required for filling out forms. The availability of information via the World Wide Web will reduce the amount of customer time spent at Service Centers.

Change management and training activities are oriented to near-term improvements in customer service. Consolidation of field offices and reengineering of business processes to achieve one-stop service represent major changes in the way USDA conducts business at the county level. The changes require training to prepare employees for the transition that is already taking place. Training for Service Center field employees is now complete. Headquarters employees training began in FY 1999 and will be completed in FY 2000. The training consists of a comprehensive three-day course that provides instruction on coping with change, team building concepts, and customer service skills. Service Center, State office, and headquarters employees are scheduled to complete training by FY 2000.

Verification and Validation: During FY 1999, USDA began validating the 1997 SCMI Baseline Business Case. This validation is achieved through a series of pilot tests in the lab and the field that support baseline process savings and benefits of reengineering identified in the 1997 SCMI Baseline Business Case. Once a concept is validated and risk is identified, exact funding requirements will be developed and a decision whether to deploy will follow. This process will be followed for every initiative associated with SCMI and is linked to USDA's capital planning process.

Customer satisfaction with USDA program delivery and service quality will be tracked and assessed through annual surveys at pilot sites that will be conducted. The survey results will be used to assess the extent to which customer satisfaction in these two key areas has increased as a result of improvement initiatives. A Customer Feedback and Complaint System is currently in pilot testing in six States and is scheduled for nationwide deployment in FY 1999. This system includes a new process for handling customer service complaints based on guidelines established by the National Performance Review. The process will provide greater responsiveness to customer complaints and ensure customers are informed

of the status of their complaints during the USDA review process. New customer feedback mechanisms will encourage customers to provide complaints, compliments, or suggestions regarding Service Center operations. The system will help ensure that USDA has greater access to customer service concerns and suggestions.

Goal 2: Deploy a shared information technology system for USDA offices that will enable reengineered business processes that improve customer service, and reduce program delivery costs and customer burden.

Objective: **2.1** Provide local and wide area data networking infrastructure and voice communications capabilities for Service Centers and collocated State offices.
2.2 Deploy a CCE that allows for sharing common information, and permits all employees to work from common desktop computer configuration utilizing standardized data in a shared information environment.
2.3 Acquire critical data themes (orthoimagery, common land unit, and soils) to serve as the foundation for a Service Center Geographic Information System (GIS).

Baseline: In FY 1997, LAN/WAN/Voice installations had been completed at 4% (110) of Service Centers and no State offices. No shared information system or geographic data were available to support program delivery.

Program Activities: Common Computing Environment

The CCE component of SCMI will continue to operate as a joint project of the Farm Services Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the agencies of the Rural Development mission area and be managed by a subcommittee of the National Food and Agriculture Council. The USDA CIO will continue to provide oversight and approve all technology investments. The Service Center Modernization Plan of the County Based Agencies, November 1999, describes the CCE phasing strategy in appendix O.

The SCMI is supported by a combination of funding from the S&E accounts and personnel contributed by the service center agencies as well as by the DA. In FY 2000, Congress provided central funding under the "Office of the Secretary" (OSEC) account. The planned breakout by funding source in $000 is:

	FY 2000	FY2001
FSA	$ 9,104	$ 9,104
NRCS	$27,146	$27,146
RD	$ 3,500	$ 3,500
CCE		$75,000
OSEC	$12,600	
TOTAL	$52,350	$114,750

	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Funding (in thousands of dollars)	$78,561	$68,977	$52,350	$114,750

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Target	FY 2001 Target
Percentage of certified service centers with LAN/WAN/Voice installed.	4%	95%	100%	100%
Percentage of State offices with LAN/WAN/Voice installed.	N/A	49%	90%	90%
Percentage of CCE workstations deployed (CCE Phase I).	N/A	43%	95%	95%
Percentage network and public access servers deployed (CCE Phase I).	N/A	N/A	N/A	90%
Percentage counties with orthoimagery.	35%	51%	58%	84%
Percentage counties with common land unit.	0.3%	0.7%	12%	41%
Percentage counties with soils data.	11%	22%	24%	45%

Discussion of Annual Performance Goals: These goals support USDA Management Initiative 2 – improve customer service by streamlining and restructuring county offices, and USDA Management Initiative 3 - create a unified system of information technology management.' These goals also support the USDA Office of Chief Information Officer goals as stated in the USDA Strategic Plan.

The LAN/WAN/Voice system is a key element of Service Center implementation since it provides the infrastructure for connectivity between Service Centers and other USDA offices. Installation will be completed in all certified Service Centers by the end of FY 2001.

CCE will provide the Service Center hardware and software that will be used to support the integrated business processes necessary to make the integrated service center a reality. At the core of SCMI vision is a shared information system that will provide Service Center staffs access to customer, program, technical, and administrative information, regardless of the agency they represent. Meeting these performance goals will help the SCMI improve the quality of customer service and reduce costs.

The GIS will improve program delivery processes, improve business decisions, reduce customer burden through faster access to data, improve data accuracy and map quality, and improve the cost-effectiveness of Service Center operations. The objective of base data acquisition is to acquire the critical data themes for all 3,141 U.S. counties by FY 2004, providing all Service Centers with GIS data and capabilities. The fourth critical data theme, cultural and demographic data, has already been acquired by Rural Development, and will be integrated into the GIS at the appropriate time.

Means and Strategies: An increase of $62.4 million is needed to begin deployment of the communications and applications servers needed to achieve these goals.

CCE Implementation Strategy builds on the initial investment in shared information technology represented by the completion of the LAN/WAN/VOICE project, and the 25,000 - Y2K compliant - computers and workstations purchased during FY 1998 and 1999. The integrated data management infrastructure currently under development will be accomplished through: standardized collection, maintenance, access, and delivery media for customer information; a common user interface for all employees; interagency sharing of applicable customer information; reduced redundancy in information collection and, therefore, reduced customer burden; and uniform shared administrative functions.

The total CCE investment is being implemented in a phased approach beginning with an initial combined FY 1998-1999 purchase of $50 million to mitigate Y2K problems. FY 2000 funding supports the deployment of network servers, initial public access services, and Geographic Information System application and data servers for approximately 500 field offices. This deployment will be followed in FY 2001 with any remaining employee workstations, network and communications servers, additional public access services, expansion of the GIS data and application servers, additional application servers for other than GIS applications, peripheral equipment, and some initial portable computing capabilities. Among the benefits resulting from this initiative are: a single, standardized Service Center computer platform with required peripheral equipment; enhanced public access to information via the World Wide Web; common office automation and administrative tools; and a common information technology support environment.

The GIS Strategy provides for a phased acquisition of the required data. Of all the program delivery BPR projects GIS has the highest potential return on investment. Over 34 percent of the calculated BPR savings come from GIS implementation. Orthoimagery is the initial priority because it provides the base map layer that other themes build upon, and will enable Service Centers to provide customers with high-quality and professional maps. Orthoimagery also enables agencies to complete activities such as digitizing and maintaining the common land unit and soils themes.

Addition of a common land unit theme to the orthoimagery base will provide expanded analysis capabilities and a more professional map to deliver to customers. Field boundaries will be spatially linked to tabular databases that will provide attributes about the land unit and annotations for map display. This will provide accurate position information for farms, tracts, fields and storage facilities.

With the ability to superimpose soils data over the orthoimagery, soils information can be efficiently displayed to show the location of various soil types and soil interpretations. This will allow processes such as sampling designs for precision agriculture, creating site-specific conservation plans based on sub-field soils delineation, and allow customers to better visualize alternatives.

The total investment required for GIS is currently estimated at $276.8 million through 2004. This includes the planned USDA investment of $199.8 million and investments by Federal, State, and local partners of $77 million. The average cost per county of the critical data themes is as follows: orthoimagery - $17,356; common land unit - $18,879; and soils - $23,878.

Acquisition, integration and delivery of the GIS data to Service Centers will be conducted under the BPR program. This effort includes reengineering current business processes, pilot testing of program delivery processes, and GIS training, evaluation of benefits, data management activities and implementation of nationwide deployment.

Verification and Validation: Progress in LAN/WAN/Voice installations is tracked in a dedicated database linked directly to the Office Information Profile. The installation database will help ensure that the status of offices during the entire implementation effort can be monitored effectively. Data for offices within each State will also be certified by State FACs to ensure that the data are accurate.

At each major stage of the design, development, and implementation of the CCE, the USDA Chief Information Officer will continue to review the methodology and progress. These reviews will verify that the CCE fits within the overall technical architecture for USDA and that it will provide a cost-effective infrastructure for delivering Service Center agency programs. The USDA Executive Information Technology Investment Review Board will make decisions using input from the Capital Planning and Investment Control program to select, control, and evaluate the CCE investments.

A significant aspect of departmental oversight is an Independent Verification and Validation process utilizing independent contractors to review CCE deliverables. Findings and recommendations from these reviews are used to monitor progress and make any necessary adjustments to the CCE process. SCMI

implementation requires a phased program that includes testing at the Business Integration Center and then testing at the pilot sites. These steps will ensure that the CCE is ready for deployment and is integrated with the BPR projects. The status of CCE implementation at individual Service Centers will be tracked in the Office Information Profile database, and certified by State FACs.

At each major stage of the base data acquisition, the USDA Chief Information Officer will continue to review the SCMI methodology and progress. The reviews will verify that the strategy remains within the overall technical architecture for USDA and that it will provide a cost-effective solution for developing the desired GIS. The Executive Information Technology Investment Review Board will make decisions using input from the Capital Planning and Investment Control program to select, control, and evaluate SCMI base data investments.

Departmental oversight also includes an Independent Verification and Validation process utilizing independent contractors to review this effort. Findings and recommendations from these reviews will be used to monitor progress and make any necessary adjustments. Implementation will be pursued in a phased program that includes testing at the Business Integration Center and at pilot test sites. These steps will ensure that GIS data is ready for deployment and is integrated properly with relevant BPR projects.

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES FOR FY 2000 (Dollars in Thousands)			
	Goal 1	Goal 2	Total
TOTAL SCMI	$22,650	$52,350	$75,000
FSA	$10,296	$9,104	$19,400
NRCS	$8,854	$27,146	$36,000
RD	$3,500	$3,500	$7,000
CCE	$0	$12,600	$12,600

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES FOR FY 2001 (Dollars in Thousands)			
	Goal 1	Goal 2	Total
TOTAL SCMI	$22,650	$114,750	$137,400
FSA	$10,296	$9,104	$19,400
NRCS	$8,854	$27,146	$36,000
RD	$3,500	$3,500	$7,000
CCE	$0	$75,000	$75,000